



COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING -- 197 MAIN STREET -- COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK 13326-1129

BOARD OF REPRESENTATIVES

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March 7, 2014

**Letter – Expression of Interest VIA ECFS**

Chairman Thomas Wheeler  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel  
Commissioner Ajit Pai  
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly  
Chief of OSP Jonathan Chambers  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW 20024  
Washington, DC

**Re: Expression of Interest – Rural Broadband Trials Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90**

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners, and Mr. Chambers:

I am writing to express Otsego County's interest in participating in the Rural Broadband Trials announced at the January 30<sup>th</sup> FCC Open Meeting. I wish to take this opportunity to document Otsego County's need for high-speed Internet service and respectfully ask the Federal Communications Commission to consider our area's need when making decisions regarding the Rural Broadband Trials and any future initiatives related to the Connect America Fund.

Otsego County is strategically located west of Albany, east of Binghamton and southeast of Utica. The county has a total area of 1,015 square miles of which 1,003 square miles is land and 12 square miles (1.21%) is water. The population, according to the 2010 census was 62,253. Historically, Otsego County is comprised of many rural communities with agrarian landscapes, one small city which is home to a significant portion of the county's population and host to two institutions of higher learning.

Otsego County is a diversified region which boasts a wealth of tourist attractions, pristine lakes and parks, and historical landscapes. Yet, the natural beauty of our confines is a mixed blessing for the same hilly topography which is counted as an asset to our tourism initiative presents a significant obstacle when attempting to establish a viable emergency communications networks. Only recently one of our residents suffered a fatal heart attack while in an area lacking a reliable communications network. The cell phone he was found clutching in his right hand was of no help since he was in an area that lacked cell phone service. Staggeringly, a nation that can send a satellite into the furthest reaches of space cannot reliably transmit electronic data or cell phone signals across the hillsides of our county.

The challenges facing Otsego County are not much different than those encountered by other counties in the state. We seek to serve the needs of our citizens and to provide fertile ground for them to sow the seeds of success that will lead to an economic resurgence and an increased standard of living for all our residents

cont.

Approximately 95% of the households in the US have access to broadband. Here in Otsego county too many of our residents are in that other 5 percentile. In today's world, those who are unable to fully access technology will surely be left behind. We are a poor rural county and without access to broadband our residents are severely disadvantaged. They cannot fully participate in today's economy nor can they take advantage of the full realm of educational opportunities available on line.

Broadband is no less important to the prosperity of rural counties today than electrification and highway construction were in the not too distant past. Broadband enables citizens, business and governments to participate fully in a host of applications that will enable them to cross the digital divide and enrich their lives. It brings with it the promise of economic revitalization and the enhanced educational opportunities necessary for success in today's competitive global environment.

It offers opportunity for students in rural areas to access advanced curriculums via distance learning programs. It can bring the expertise of a medical specialist to the confines of a clinic located in a rural area. It allows for x-rays and MRI's to be read virtually 24/7 from locations around the world. It can bring the benefits of e-commerce and a global marketplace to an entrepreneur who wishes to live locally yet compete globally. It allows existing business to remain here while at the same time attracts new business ventures seeking the lower costs associated with rural real estate as well as the desirable lifestyle found here amidst the beauty of the surrounding countryside.

Economic rejuvenation will not happen overnight but clearly if it is to happen at all, then it is imperative that we have the same means to conduct financial, educational, technological and social transactions as the other 95% of Americans do. While many of our anchor institutions along the main corridor from Oneonta (our only city) to the picturesque village of Cooperstown have broadband services available to them, many of the county businesses and residents remain in the dark ages as it were and are either unserved or the services are cost prohibitive. Less densely populated, economically depressed areas are no less in need of access to quality high speed broadband and certainly are no less deserving.

Otsego County is interested in working with Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board to bring an open-access, middle-mile fiber ring through our region. This cooperative effort would allow last mile service providers to expand at a reasonable cost and provide the telephone, internet, television and data services Otsego County and others in the Southern Tier Region are so sorely lacking. We enthusiastically welcome this initiative and remain hopeful that it will be another key stepping stone on the path towards a brighter future for the people of Otsego County.

Attached to this letter are maps from the NYS Broadband website showing the existing provider footprints and service area for Otsego County. Direct access is available at [www.broadbandmap.ny.gov](http://www.broadbandmap.ny.gov). The key last mile providers are Clarity Connect, AT&T Mobile, Frontier Communications, Verizon NY and Verizon wireless, Windstream, T Mobile, Sprint, Time Warner Cable and Plexicomm. The "middle-mile" providers include Ion, Time Warner and Version.



### KEY ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

State University at Oneonta – City of Oneonta  
Hartwick College – City of Oneonta  
Utica School of Commerce – City of Oneonta  
BOCES - Milford  
A.O. Fox Memorial Hospital City of Oneonta  
Bassett Healthcare – Village of Cooperstown  
New York Central Mutual – 2<sup>nd</sup> highest employer in Otsego County – Edmeston  
Corning Inc – City of Oneonta  
Mold-A-Matic (MAMCO) City of Oneonta  
Astrocom Electronics – City of Oneonta  
Medical Coaches – Town of Oneonta  
Ioxus – Town of Oneonta  
Burt Rigid Box Inc. – Town of Oneonta  
Custom Electronics – City of Oneonta  
Huntington Memorial Library – City of Oneonta

The goal would be to increase speed in areas where broadband is currently available and to provide access and promote affordability in the surrounding areas currently unserved in order to allow for remote access to business, government, individuals and agricultural enterprises. The goal is noble but the cost prohibitive. The \$7 million price tag associated with building a fiber ring to provide the middle mile service is beyond attainment for a county with 62,000 residents and a per capita income that pales in comparison to many other counties in the state.

Otsego County appreciates this opportunity to provide an Expression of Interest in your decisions about the amount of funding that will be allocated in the Rural Broadband Trials. We commend you in this effort to connect rural communities and are ready to help you close the digital divide.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Clark  
Chairperson of the Otsego County Board of Representatives  
Otsego County

cc. Telecommunications Committee  
B. Pokorny, Otsego Co. IT



















